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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Forty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1069th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 11 July 1991, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. POCAR

CONTENTS

Statement by Mr. Martenson, Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant (continued)

Second periodic report of Morocco (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

STATEMENT BY MR. MARTENSON, UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Mr. MARTENSON welcomed the Committee and congratulated the new members, Mr. Herndl and Mr. Sadi, on their election.

2. Ratification by a further two States, Nepal and Zimbabwe, had brought the number of States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to 95. In addition, ratification by the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, Mongolia and Nepal had now brought the number of States parties to the Optional Protocol to 54. Furthermore, the Second Optional Protocol aiming at the abolition of the death penalty was due to come into force in the course of the day, 11 July 1991, since the tenth instrument of ratification had been deposited by Spain three months previously.

3. In regard to the implementation of the recommendations of the third meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, he informed the Committee that the consolidated guidelines for the initial part of States parties' reports had now been transmitted to all States parties, who had been requested to submit the required information and data by the end of 1991. The Manual on Human Rights Reporting had been circulated to all members of the Committee and would shortly be sent to all States parties. Moreover, in accordance with the relevant Commission on Human Rights and General Assembly resolutions, the Secretary-General would in the near future be inviting States to make voluntary contributions to cover the one-time costs associated with the installation of the computerized database, which it was hoped to establish within the Centre within the next two years in order to facilitate the work of the treaty bodies.

4. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had continued to receive particular attention in recent months and the pace of ratifications or accessions had continued to be very remarkable, rising from 53 in October 1990 to 74 in March 1991 and to 89 at the present time.

5. During the current year, as part of the preparatory process for the first session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Centre for Human Rights had convened a series of meetings and consultations involving all the relevant major international agencies and organizations as well as interested non-governmental organizations. A two-day meeting had been held in January with representatives of UNICEF, ILO, FAO, WHO, UNESCO, the World Bank, UNDP, the World Food Programme and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The interest exhibited by those agencies in the implementation of the Convention and in the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been particularly encouraging. In May 1991, the Centre had again arranged consultations with intergovernmental organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, INTERPOL and the Inter-American Children's Institute, as well as with the representatives of a large number of non-governmental organizations; the interest of those organizations and their willingness to cooperate in achieving the aims of the Convention augured well for the future. Finally, he had convened an informal meeting of the Committee on the Rights of the Child which had been attended by representatives both of

United Nations agencies and of non-governmental organizations. The Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, Mr. Pocar, who had been present at the meeting, had made a particularly valuable contribution by providing members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child with an opportunity to acquaint themselves with the work of other treaty bodies. There was no doubt that those preparatory activities would contribute to the success of the work of the first session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to be held from 30 September to 18 October 1991.

6. Preparations had also been going forward for the World Conference on Human Rights, a conference which would provide an unprecedented opportunity for taking stock of recent major changes in international relations and mapping out a course of action for the United Nations human rights programme for the years immediately ahead and even into the next century. Preparations for the World Conference were proceeding along two principal tracks: firstly, a review of current developments, in particular the integration of human rights into national and international policies and programmes; and, secondly, the need to strengthen and rationalize implementation machinery in the field of human rights. In the latter field, he had suggested for possible study topics such as the importance of strengthening conventional and extra-conventional mechanisms, reporting systems and complaints procedures; the need to improve mechanisms for the follow-up of decisions, recommendations and reports; the possibility of creating a standing "super-body" to assume the functions currently exercised by the existing treaty bodies; and a review of the role of the specialized agencies and other United Nations organs in the field of human rights, with a view to avoiding duplication and improving coordination.

7. There was no need, in his view, for the Conference to seek to reconceptualize human rights standards or to focus on human rights situations in individual countries. It should concentrate rather on practical ways of building upon the not inconsiderable accomplishments of the human rights programme in terms both of procedure and of structure, and on increasing significantly the flow of resources to the human rights sector. The Human Rights Committee, which had been giving thought to those matters and would be considering during the current session some recommendations made by one of the pre-sessional working groups, would doubtless be able to formulate suggestions of the greatest interest to the Preparatory Committee of the World Conference which would be meeting in September.

8. In regard to the activities of the Committee against Torture, the most recent session of which had been held from 22 April to 3 May 1991, it was to be noted that the Committee had had an extremely useful exchange of views with the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, which was currently administering projects amounting to more than $2 million. The Committee against Torture had also discussed the question of a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, a draft which had been submitted by Costa Rica to the Commission on Human Rights at its forty-seventh session and would, if adopted, provide for a system of visits to places of detention on a worldwide basis with a view to preventing acts of torture.

9. With regard to recent advisory services activities, he said that the Centre had in recent weeks helped to organize or had participated in several workshops or training courses, relating in particular to the following activities: a workshop for Portuguese-speaking countries on the teaching of human rights, held in Lisbon; a national training course on the application of United Nations human rights mechanisms and procedures, held in Caracas; and a national training course on international standards in the field of human rights, held at Brasilia. An African workshop on human rights and the administration of justice was currently being held in Cairo, and the Centre was planning to hold a national workshop on the implementation of international standards in Moscow at the end of August.

10. He assured the Committee that he was always glad to assist it in any way in carrying out its important duties.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 40 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 4) (continued)

Second periodic report of Morocco (CCPR/C/42/Add.10) (continued)

11. The CHAIRMAN announced that it was necessary for the Committee to suspend its work in the light of certain technical problems affecting the conduct of the meeting and that further consideration of the report of Morocco would be deferred until the next meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.